

Proclamation 6946 of October 24, 1996

United Nations Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year we dedicate a day to celebrate the United Nations because it represents America's commitment to an institution dedicated to the promotion of peace and freedom.

The United Nations was born at the end of World War II, as the international community sent representatives to San Francisco to sign the official charter. The world's sovereign countries came in search of peace, freedom, tolerance, and cooperation after a period when many worried that the world had lost these ideals forever. These ideals became—and still remain—the bedrock principles of the United Nations Charter. And although the United Nations has not yet realized all its founders' aspirations, these ideals now touch more people in more nations than ever before.

International cooperation—as exemplified by the work of the United Nations—offers the opportunity for nations to work together in addressing worldwide problems like ethnic, tribal, or interreligious disputes; famine, drought, or epidemics; natural disasters, war, or refugee crises. On United Nations Day, we recognize this unique institution's role in helping individual nations come together as a community to make life better for all people.

To be sure, as we celebrate its 51st anniversary, the U.N.'s challenges are very different from those the world faced at the close of World War II. But the challenges are real and substantial. There are, for example, still too many places in the world where failed ideologies increase the suffering of people rather than making their lives easier; where human rights and human dignity are not officially recognized; where nuclear weapons remain a threat to the world's security; where honest and impartial observers are needed to ensure free democratic elections; and where international expertise is needed to replace ecological damage with sustainable development.

Americans are justifiably proud of the role our country played in creating the United Nations as part of a network of global institutions intended to reduce the chances of war and economic depression. We continue to recognize that, in a world of increasing interdependence, the United States' engagement and leadership in the United Nations is as important now as it has ever been. We will also persist in our efforts to achieve the reforms necessary to ensure that the organization is prepared to meet the demands of a new era and that we as a Nation honor our commitments to our fellow members.

On this special day, as we honor and celebrate the work of the United Nations, let us renew our commitment and determination to work with our fellow members to maintain international peace and security, to strive for a higher quality of life, and to champion human rights for all peoples.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 24, 1996, as United Nations Day. I encourage all Americans to acquaint themselves with the activities and accomplishments of the United Nations and to ob-

serve this day with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities furthering the goal of international cooperation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6947 of October 29, 1996

National Adoption Month, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Thousands of American children have never known what it is like to belong to a family—to grow up with the comfort and security that most of us take for granted. They are children whose parents, for a variety of reasons, are unable or unwilling to care for them. Instead, these children often find themselves drifting from home to home in foster care. They live every day without mothers or fathers to guide them, nurture them, and tell them that they are special.

Adoption is a commonsense solution that places children in permanent homes with parents who will offer them love and security. National Adoption Month is a time for all Americans to reflect on the rewards of joining children who need families with adults who seek the responsibilities and joys of parenthood. This month is an opportunity to celebrate family, especially families formed by adoptions.

Our Nation has no greater responsibility than to ensure that every child has the chance to live up to his or her God-given potential. We can help meet that challenge by identifying a permanent, loving family for every child waiting in the foster care system.

Among the approximately 86,000 children who will await adoption within the next few years are tens of thousands with special needs. Many of these, through no fault of their own, wait years for adoption. Yet when these children are accepted into loving family environments, they can bring the same joy, affection, and love to their adoptive families as other children bring.

In recent years, we have made important strides in encouraging parents to adopt. I have signed legislation to help facilitate adoptions by prohibiting discrimination based on race or ethnicity in placement decisions, increasing the recruitment of adoptive parents, and providing a tax credit to families who adopt children.

Much remains to be done, however. As a Nation, we must continue to work to remove obstacles to adoption, to recruit new adoptive families, to offer financial incentives for placements, and to provide support to parents adopting children with special needs. Nothing should stand in the way of providing every boy and girl in America the permanent, loving home each of them deserves. Children are, after all, our country's most precious resource and our most important responsibility.